Westminster Abbey

The Very Rev.
Dean Farrar

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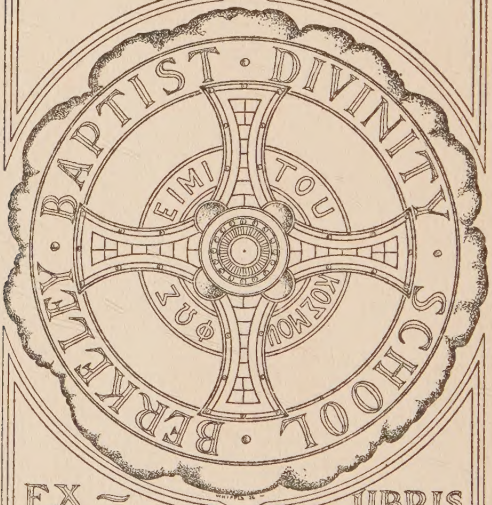

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St. Margaret's and the Abbey

Westminster Abbey

By

The Very Rev.
F. W. Farrar, D.D.
Dean of Canterbury

Illustrated by
Herbert Railton

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Westminster Abbey

To those who have neither eyes to see, knowledge to understand, nor sensibility to enjoy, a visit to Westminster Abbey is too often a blank of dulness and disappointment. But what such a visit might be to a man of universal knowledge, unlimited interest, and complete sympathy, no one can understand; for no single person possesses or can possess the consummate culture which would be requisite for the reception of such full impressions.

Let me try to catalogue some of the varied regions of delight and interest.

First, there is the religious symbolism of the building. Its structure is by no means accidental. Down to the minutest particulars it is "a theology in stone." Its prevalent number is three—triple height, triple length, triple breadth—to remind us of the doctrine of the Trinity. Its other predominant numbers are *four*—the number of earthly perfectness, the signature of the world, and of divine revelation; and *seven*—the signature of the Covenant, and of the seven spirits of God, and of the seven pillars of the House of Wisdom. Its structure is cruciform to remind us of the Atonement. Even the geometrical designs which lie at the base of its ground plan are combinations of the triangle, the circle, and the oval—the symbols of the Trinity, of Eternity, and of the saintly aureole. It would require the soul of a mediæval theologian or a mediæval mystic to take in all the rich significance of these elaborate emblems which extend even to the minutest details.

Then there is the scientific and architectural interest. To the intelligent architect the Abbey, with all its exquisite proportions, becomes a sort of epic in stone. He looks with delight on all the details of its ornamentation; he easily observes where the work of Edward I. joins on to that of Henry III., and that of Richard II. to that of Edward I., and that of Henry V. to that of Richard II.; and he sees at once that the great Perpendicular west window belongs to the age of Henry VII., and the days of Abbot Islip. He looks with delight on the minute varying details of arch and moulding, and window tracery, and wall-surface decoration, and he traces in these variations the character and tendencies of the ages to which they belong. I once went over the whole Abbey with the late Sir Gilbert Scott, and he had fifty things to point out which no ordinary observer would have thought of noticing. To enter fully into them we should require the training and insight of

such a man as he, or Sir Christopher Wren, or Mr. Ruskin.

Then, thirdly, there is the poetic and emotional sentiment. To realise that adequately we must have the mind and emotions of a poet such as Wordsworth, in his famous sonnet,—

> "They dreamt not of a perishable home
> Who thus could build! Be mine, in hours of fear
> Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here,
> Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam;
> Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam
> Melts, if it cross the threshold; where the wreath
> Of awe-struck wisdom droops."

But, fourthly, a great sculptor might again be chiefly interested by the artistic creations which meet him on every side. In this single building he can amply trace the rise, the fall, the decadence, the revival of English sculpture from the lovely effigy of Aveline of Lancaster, through the coarse, blubbering cherubs of the reign of Anne, and the heavy classicalities of Gibson, and the false taste of Roubiliac, down to such fine statues as the

bowed prisoner of Flaxman (behind the statue of Lord Mansfield), and the Viceroy Canning of Foley. To treat of this we should have to walk through the Abbey with such men as Mr. Gilbert, or Mr. Bruce Joy, or Sir Edgar Boehm.

Then again, how much should we gain at every step and every turn by a thorough and masterly knowledge of History! How delightful an appreciation of this inexhaustible source of interest is shown by every allusion to the Abbey in the pages of Lord Macaulay! It was while he was standing under the bust of Warren Hastings that Dean Milman suggested to him the idea of his splendid essay on the great Proconsul; and his allusion to the effigy of Chatham is one of the best-known passages in his works. When we tread the pavement of the Abbey, not only is every step we take on holy ground, but also on classic ground. Here stood Shakespeare and Ben Jonson and Marlowe when they flung their pens and

their verses upon the coffin of Spenser. Here Samuel Johnson leant in tears at the funeral of Oliver Goldsmith; here sat Charles I., all in ill-omened white satin, at his coronation; here little Prince Alfonso, son of Edward I., hung over the tomb of the Confessor the golden coronet of Llewellyn, Prince of Wales; here stood Henry VI., half-dazed, and marked for his grave the place where he was never destined to lie; here sat Queen Victoria on the day of her Jubilee. Who could enter into even half of such associations unless he had some of the knowledge of a Freeman or a Washington Irving?

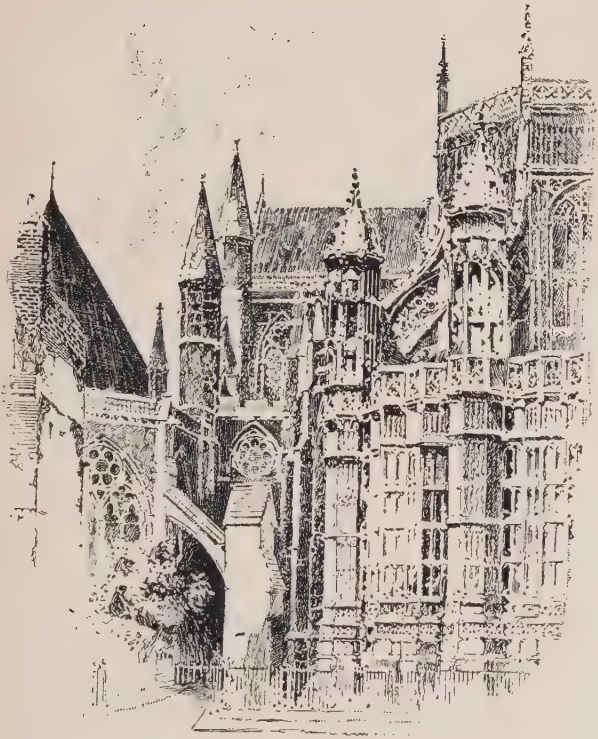
Again an antiquarian would find much to observe with pleasure which another man would pass over from want of knowledge. Here he would stop to notice the change, from generation to generation, of the entire meaning and idea of monumental memorials. He would point to the first effigy which rises from the recumbent attitude of death

to kneel upon its knees; the first which stands upright; the first which substitutes the ambitions and vanities of life for the humility and repose of the grave; the first which sits and lolls in its easy chair. Here, he would say, is the first instance on any tomb of the foolish and repellent symbol of the skull and cross-bones. Yonder is the earliest metal effigy, and so forth. A Dart or a Camden could pour a flood of new light on many an obscure and disregarded corner.

And not to multiply too many illustrations, if a man be endowed with nothing more than the "picturesque sensibility" which was one of the charming characteristics of Dean Stanley, how much more vivid will be all his varied impressions, and how inexhaustible will be the power and the keenness of his interest! Dean Stanley seemed to find fresh delight and fresh instruction in the Abbey every day.

Multitudes are puzzled by the fact that a

parish church should stand so close beside the stately Abbey, which dwarfs into insignificance its smaller, yet not insignificant, proportions. We are often told that the mediæval builders, in almost every cathedral city, delighted to erect smaller churches besides the huge masses of these minsters, to serve as a scale whereby to measure the size of the larger edifices. Certainly the result is effective. The would-be lovers of the picturesque who glibly talk about pulling down St. Margaret's to improve the view of the Abbey, talk ignorant nonsense. Many years ago a Government Committee, following all the best artistic advice of the age, decided that the aspect of the Abbey is in every sense improved by the vicinity of the smaller building. St. Margaret's, perhaps, saved the Abbey itself from destruction. Lord Protector Somerset wanted to pull down the church, in order to use its material for the building of his huge palace—Somerset House; and it was shrewdly suspected that,



Poets Corner & Henry VII Chapel

if he had succeeded in this, he would next have laid sacrilegious hands upon the Abbey also. But the inhabitants of St. Margaret's parish rose in fury, and drove away his workmen, so that his evil designs were perforce abandoned. London could never be guilty of so gross an act of barbarism as the destruction of a church which has a larger, more varied, and more interesting history than any parish church in England, and which is connected with associations of some of our greatest worthies—among others of Caxton, of Raleigh, and of Milton.

The church was originally built—as far back, certainly, as the days of the Confessor, and, perhaps, even earlier—for the worship of the population. The Abbey was not intended for parochial services. Its choir was the daily chapel of the Benedictine monks. Its nave was not a place for worship, but was set apart for great national and ecclesiastical processions. St. Margaret's is the most ancient, and was at one time the

only church west of Temple Bar. It served as the religious centre of a district which was then but sparsely inhabited, but now numbers myriads of inhabitants. It is only during the course of centuries that the parishes of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, St. George's Hanover Square, St. John's Westminster, and multitudes of others have been cut out of its original extent.

But to turn to the Abbey itself, let us pause before the exterior of the east end of Henry VII.'s chapel, with the end of the south transept, one of the flying buttresses, and a corner of the Chapter House, projecting behind the private house of one of the Minor Canons. The name, "Henry VII.'s Chapel," has entirely superseded the name of "Lady Chapel." In mediæval minsters the chapel at the east end was invariably dedicated to the Virgin Mary, who was commonly referred to as "Our Lady." The position of the chapel, in the symbolism which ran through the minutest

details of these sacred buildings, was meant to indicate the Virgin standing beside the cross, during the Crucifixion. But just as the gorgeous chapel at Windsor was known as "Wolsey's," and now as the "Prince Consort's Chapel," so the splendid and lavish expenditure of the first Tudor king on this memorial, intended to enshrine his tomb, has connected it permanently with his name. It is perhaps the loveliest specimen of richly decorated Perpendicular architecture in the world. The reader cannot fail to observe the exquisitely delicate lacework of its ornamentation. It still retains its charm in spite of the deadly fumes which we suffer to be poured in volumes into the air of London from the neighbouring potteries and other works; but when it came fresh from the sculptor's hands, and before it was densely begrimed by the ever-accumulating soot of centuries, it must have been a vision of perfect beauty. This scene is called "Poets' Corner," because it leads to the entrance

into the south transept, where the poets lie buried. Just as the remains of the sainted Confessor attracted round them the dust of so many kings and queens, so the grave of Chaucer acted as a magnet to draw into its neighbourhood the memorials of Drayton, Ben Jonson, Spenser, Shakespeare, Gray, Addison, and many more, including the great Victorians, Robert Browning and Alfred Tennyson.

The Chapter House was commenced in A. D. 1250, when, Matthew Paris says, "*the Lord King* (Henry III.) built *the incomparable Chapter House.*" The Chapter House was the building in which the abbot, the prior, and the monks met every week, to consult for the welfare of the monastery.* The monastic chapter houses were all but invariably rectangular; this is an octagon which Henry III., with reckless lavishness, erected to replace the circular chapter house of the Confessor. Gargoyles stand out prominently at the tops of the buttresses. The projection

Entrance to
Chapter House

of the gargoyles is a characteristic of the Early English style. The gargoyles themselves, in their grotesque and fantastic ugliness, represent the demons who are excluded from the sacred precincts.

The Chapter House is visited by comparatively few of the myriads who come to the Abbey; but those who know what to look for may well linger for some time in this deeply interesting building. The splendour and loveliness of the entrance to it show the important place which it held in the general estimation. The stones under the left arcade of the vestibule are still deeply worn by the feet of generations of monks, as they walked two and two to their weekly assemblies. The vaulting and its bosses are quaint and rich. The quaint entrance door itself, bleared and ruined as it now is, was once rich with gold and scarlet. The moulding around it represents "a stem of Jesse." On the pedestal between the two doors stood a lovely figure of the Virgin,

and on each side of her was a censing angel. The central figure has been shattered to pieces, and the heads of the angels have been destroyed with ruthless bigotry; but the drapery of the robes shows how lovely the figures must once have been, as their wings and faces stood out on the foliated diaper of the tympanum.

If the visitor will look up, he will see on the central boss of the cloister the pulley, centuries old, over which one passed the rope for the lamp that was kept ever burning before this figure of the Virgin. It was this "superstitious use" which led to the demolition of the image.

As we pass through the vestibule we may notice several things.

It is low, because the dormitory of the monks ran over it, and it is supported by small pillars of Purbeck marble, which once shone with polished lustre. These pillars have been attached to the capitals by *lead*, over which was placed the stone moulding;

but the expansion and contraction of the metal, small as it is, has been sufficient entirely to destroy the stone moulding, and in many places to leave only a ring of lead.

The door to the right led into a crypt, or treasury. It is of solid oak, with ancient iron lock, and on part of it are still to be traced fragments of the human skin—the skin of some thief who had been executed—which was once nailed over it to terrify depredators. The same was also the case with the door opposite to it, which leads into the Chapel of St. Faith (erroneously called the Chapel of St. Blaise), which was the old Revestry.

On the left-hand side is the stone coffin of Valerius Amandinus, a Roman, which was found on the north side of the Abbey. It has evidently been utilised by some later ecclesiastic, as may be seen by the cross on the upper stone.

Entering the Chapter House, we see at a

glance an octagon of the noblest proportions, of which the roof is supported by a slender and graceful pillar of polished Purbeck, thirty-five feet high, "surrounded by eight subordinate shafts, attached to it by three moulded bands." The capital, though of marble, is richly carved. All round the building run seats of stone, under arcades with trefoiled heads. The marble capitals are carved with foliage; the work is diapered with roses and other flowers; the floor, long preserved by a wooden covering, is "one of the finest encaustic tile pavements now remaining," and, among other interesting designs, one of them preserves the only known copy of the ancient rose window at the end of the north transept, which has recently been restored to its original condition. The walls under the arcades were once covered with frescoes. Those of the thirteenth century, in the sedilia of the abbot and his priors, are exquisitely beautiful figures of Cherubim and Seraphim, Angels

and Virtues to whom Christ is setting forth the mysteries of redemption. On their wings are inscribed the names of the chief Christian virtues. The other frescoes, which are still preserved, are much coarser. They represent scenes from the Apocalypse, and were painted in the reign of Edward IV. by a monk named John of Northampton. The painted windows were placed there as a memorial to Dean Stanley. One was given by the Queen, and one by Americans. In the central light, at the summit of each, is represented the greatest man of each century—the Venerable Bede, St. Anselm, Roger Bacon, Chaucer, Caxton, and Shakespeare. In the window over the door is Queen Victoria. The central band of the windows represents many of the great historical events connected with the Abbey.

The series of scenes on these Chapter House windows is so interesting that the reader may spend a delightful quarter of an hour in identifying them. As few people

are able to do so, I here give them, and I should recommend the visitor to get a pleasant history-lesson by making them out with the following key.

Beginning with the first large window on the left, which was Dean Stanley's own gift —the window which has St. Anselm in the upper circle—the four kings on the top row are William the Conqueror, William Rufus, Henry II., and Richard I.; the historical scenes are: (1) The coronation of the Conqueror in the Abbey. (2) The miracle of St. Wulfstan. He was the only Saxon bishop who was allowed to retain his see, and the legend says that, refusing to give up his crozier to any one but the Confessor, from whom he had received it, he laid it on his tomb. There it miraculously stuck, and no one could lift it, until when he stretched out his hand for it, it was easily raised. He was therefore allowed to retain it. (3) The conflict of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, described farther on. (4) The

gathering of the Crusaders under Cœur de Lion.

In the next window, given by the Queen, the circle contains the head of Roger Bacon. The kings are John, Henry III., Edward I., and Edward II. The historic scenes are: (1) The signing of Magna Charta. (2) Henry III. examining the plans of the Abbey. (3) Alfonso, Prince of Wales, hanging up the coronet of Llewellyn. (4) The placing of the Stone of Fate in the Coronation chair.

The next window, dominated by Chaucer, was given by the Americans. The royal personages are Edward III., Philippa, the Black Prince, Richard II. The scenes are: (1) The monks in the Chapter House. (2) The House of Commons in the Chapter House. (3) The Black Prince carried to the Parliament. (4) Richard II. consulting the Hermit of Westminster before meeting Wat Tyler.

Over the fourth window is Caxton. The

kings are: Henry IV., Henry V., Henry VI., Edward IV. The Scenes are: (1) The death of Henry IV. in the Jerusalem Chamber. (2) Henry V.'s Council. (3) Henry VI. choosing his grave in Westminster—the grave in which he was not destined to lie. (4) Elizabeth Woodville, with her son, Richard, Duke of York, taking sanctuary in the College Hall.

Over the fifth window is Shakespeare. The sovereigns are: Henry VII., Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Mary. The scenes are: (1) The marriage of Henry VII. (2) Wolsey's convocation in the Chapter House. (3) Dissolution of the monasteries. (4) The funeral of Edward VI.

As the Abbots of Westminster placed in the lowest compartments of the window are comparatively little known, I will not trouble the reader with their names.

When the visitor stands in this glorious Chapter House, he stands on the spot round which centre some of the most important

events in English history. The scenes here enacted may have been sufficiently exciting for the monks, when they confessed their sins to one another, or were accused and judged, and scourged in the sight of the community before that central pillar. But how far more memorable was the assembly when the Chapter House was set apart, before 1340, for the separate use of the House of Commons. The Speaker sat in the abbot's seat. Under this roof were passed such far-reaching Acts as the Statute of Provisors (1350) and the Statute of *Præmunire*, which "pared the Pope's nails to the quick, and then cut his fingers." Here Wolsey held his court as Cardinal Legate. Here the martyrs, Bilney and Barnes, were tried and sentenced to be burnt for their Protestant opinions. Here were passed the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Submission; and before that slender pillar was laid the Black Book of damning evidence against the monasteries, which led

to their dissolution, and roused a cry of indignation from the listening senators. And here the House of Commons continued to sit till the last day of the reign of Henry VIII. In 1547, the first year of Edward VI., the Chapel of St. Stephen, in the Palace of Westminster, was prepared for the use of the Lower House, and the Chapter House, though it was no longer used for their debates, was still regarded as public property, and was turned into the Record Office, in which, for three centuries more, were kept Doomsday Book and all the other precious documents of the Kingdom. In 1865 it was happily restored from its condition of neglect and defacement by Sir Gilbert Scott.

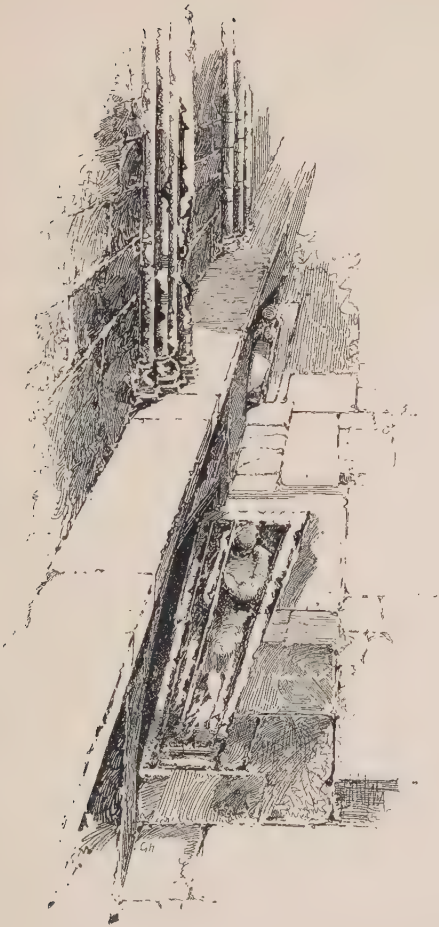
We now pass into the south cloister—the one which is in a line with the entrance from Dean's Yard. This walk and the western cloister, which leads straight into the Abbey, were begun in 1350 by Abbot Langham, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal, and finished in 1380 by

Abbot Littlington, out of the sums which the Cardinal Archbishop bequeathed.* This southern walk was the place in which, under the supervision of the "spies of the cloister," the Benedictine monks passed the greater part of the day—all that was not set apart for worship, labour, sleep, and meals. Here, for centuries, they might have been seen in their long black tunics, with large-sleeved, black, upper frocks, and split cowls with pointed ends. Here they were shaved once a fortnight, and bled once a month. As he walks down the cloister let the visitor notice the ancient lockers which once contained the towels of the monks; the gravestone of the little nephews and nieces of John Wesley; the large flagstone ("Long Meg") under which lie the bodies of twenty-six monks, who, with their abbot, Byrcheston, were swept away by the disastrous plague of 1348.

* The initials of Abbot Littlington (N. L. under a mitre) may be seen on the boss of groining near the entrance, and his arms on other bosses.

Under the stone bench towards the east end lie the effigies of three of the abbots—Vitalis, appointed by the interest of William the Conqueror, an excellent ecclesiastic, who died in 1085; Laurence, the first mitred abbot, who procured the canonisation of Edward the Confessor, and died in 1170; and Gervase, the natural son of King Stephen of Blois, a bad abbot, who was reproved by Pope Innocent II., and died in 1100, having been deposed from his office.

The passage at the end of this cloister, leading to the right, is called "The Dark Cloister." Over it may be seen the square oaken frame of a window now filled up. It was, perhaps, the window of a sub-prior's dormitory, and by it is a bracket, evidently intended for a lamp. This dark cloister is interesting as a relic of the oldest part of the Abbey buildings. It is Early Norman work, of the days of the Confessor. It led to the Infirmary, with its chapel and garden, where



Tombs of Abbot Crispin and Abbot Vitalis

the sick monks had to be removed when they had suffered from bleeding or any other cause. Here they had rest and peace, and more indulgences than in the bleak cloister where their daily lives were passed.

The West Walk—now so familiar to the scholars of Westminster School, who stand along it on Sundays, in their white surplices, to await and salute the Canon and Master as they enter the Abbey—was also built by Abbot Littlington, and was in old days the novices' school. For many a long year has it resounded with the murmurs of the boys as they sat conning their lessons, and sometimes, perhaps, with their cries, as they received the rough corporal punishment of past times. Their books were kept in two aumbreys, now obliterated by a square, hideous, pretentious tomb, erected to I know not whom. The holes which may still be seen here and there in the stone bench, sometimes arranged in nines, are a relic of the games at "*knockings in and out*,"

played by those boys of so many centuries ago. The building over the cloister is part of the modern Deanery, which was the palace of the former abbots. The green garth was pleasant to the eyes of the monks. It used, no doubt, to be bright with flowers, and sometimes a tame stork, or other domestic pet of the monastery, might have been seen wandering there. But, also, an open grave was always visible in the green space, and in that open grave each monk knew that his body would be placed if he happened to be the first to die. It was a perpetual *memento mori* to wean their thoughts from the worldliness which could penetrate too fatally even into the cloister precincts.

Let us next turn into the east cloister. To the right of it are crypts and treasuries, and monastic buildings, including the Chapel of the Pyx, as old as the days of the Confessor. The principal doors are those of the Chapter House vestibule already described,

George Gareth
Joshua Rollins

and that which now leads to the Chapter Library, but was once the entrance to the staircase leading up to the dorter or monks' dormitory. Beyond the entrance to the Chapter House, on the right, is the tomb of Sir Edmund Bury Godfrey,* whose mysterious murder, in 1681, led to all the horrors of the "Popish Plot," in the reign of Charles II. Beyond this is the part of the cloister—cut off in reality from the space which properly belongs to the south transept of the church—which was exclusively reserved for the lord abbot. The hole through which his bell-rope came down from the rubble roof is still visible. On the stone bench to the left sat the twelve beggars whose feet he washed "with sundrie solemn rites and signs of great humilitie," on every Maundy-Thursday (the *Dies Mandati*, or day in which Christ gave His new command to

* He was the justice before whom Titus Oates laid his first pretended revelations; and three weeks later his murdered body was found in a ditch near Primrose Hill.

His disciples), in memory of the washing of the disciples' feet. The copper eyes from which (as Mr. Micklethwaite has conjectured) hung the carpet on which he knelt during the performance of the ceremony, still remain under the nosing of the bench.

Before we leave the cloisters, we must turn down the Dark Cloister, and to our left. The passage will lead us through the three arches, of different ages of architecture —one Norman, one of the fourteenth, and one of the eighteenth century—into the Little Cloisters, with their central fountain. They were the Abbey buildings set apart for the sick monks.* They are now surrounded by the houses of the Organist, the Precentor, the Receiver, and some of the Cathedral clergy, which have replaced the old In-

* The large accommodation provided for the sickness of monks, who probably never exceeded seventy in number, seems to show that monasticism was not a healthy mode of life. But their frequent sicknesses may have been partly due to the insane practice of monthly bleeding.

firmary, with its hall and ancient Chapel of St. Catharine and Infirmarer's house. Parts of these old buildings are still preserved among the modern houses, and the arches of the chapel (which was destroyed in 1571) are still visible. In this chapel the young monks used to be whipped privately, not like the older offenders, in the Chapter House. Bishops were frequently consecrated in its precincts. It was once a very memorable place, the scene of more than twenty provincial councils. In one of these occurred (in 1175) the dispute for precedence between Richard, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Roger, Archbishop of York, in the reign of Henry II. Finding the southern Primate seated at the right hand of the Cardinal Legate, the northern Primate promptly sat down on his lap! The servants of the Archbishop of Canterbury plucked him away, while the Bishop of Ely threw the prelate of York on his face, and trampled on him. He indignantly rushed off to the King, who was

hearing mass in the Abbey, and showed his torn cope. He did not receive much comfort; but from that time the prelate of Canterbury was called "Primate of *all* England," and the prelate of York, "Primate of England." The visitor should walk back into the Chapter House and see the representation of this strange scene, on the first of the painted windows. In St. Catharine's Chapel, also, occurred (in 1252) the solemn ratification of Magna Charta by Henry III., in the presence of St. Edmund of Canterbury when the Archbishop, the Bishops, and the King himself stood with lighted candles in their hands, and "dashed them to the ground, whilst each dignitary closed his nostrils and his eyes against the smoke and smell, with the words, 'So go out, with smoke and stench, the accursed souls of those who break or pervert the Charter.'" * The anathemas, however, ended in smoke,

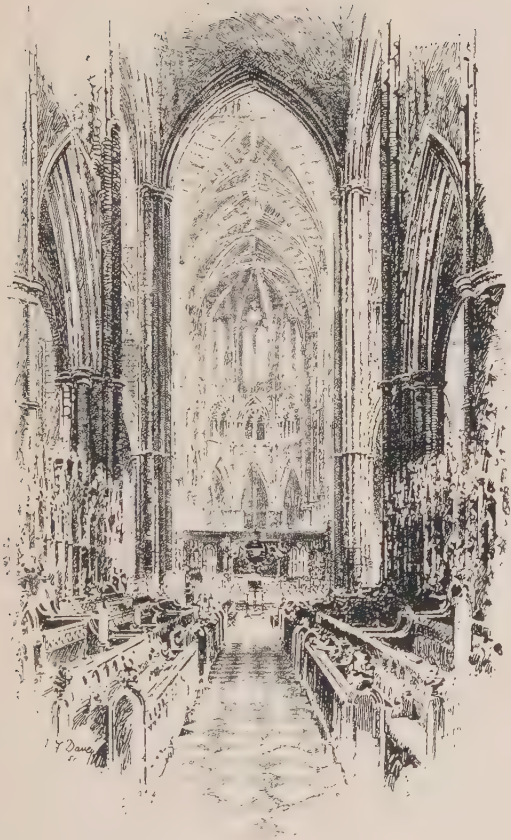
* Dean Stanley's "Memorials of Westminster Abbey," p. 413.

and nothing else, for weak King Henry incontinently violated the Charter again and again.

Thus, then, in a walk round the cloisters, the visitor may gain a notion of the whole life of a Benedictine monk in the Middle Ages. Passing through Dean's Yard he is in the Sanctuary precincts, which contained their granary, mill, calberge, and guest-house. Entering the cloister he passes through the reception-parlour, where they met their relatives and visitors. Then he must imagine that the west cloister, to his left, is full of boys who fill it with the busy murmur of their voices as they study under the stern rule of the master of the novices, though their eyes often wander to the petulant tame stork which is so fond of coming up to them for food and caresses. The cloister before him still contains the stone "lockers" where the monks kept their towels, close by the adjoining lavatory. Up and down this cloister walked its appointed guardian, who saw that

the monks were silent and employed. Behind this wall ran their vast refectory, of which the windows, now filled up, may be seen from the opposite side of the garth above the cloister leads. In the green garth sleep generations of monks who have passed away and been forgotten. In the east cloister are the entrances to the dorter and the Chapter House, and the part reserved for the lord abbot's Maundy service. The quadrangle is completed by the Scriptorium full of monks diligently engaged in reading or in copying and illuminating manuscripts. The beautiful door at the end of the west cloister opened into the Abbey, and through it they often wended their way with solemn litanies. By the east door they usually entered for their seven daily and nightly services.

We now leave the cloisters, and enter the Abbey itself. Before us is the choir, the east end, with the *sacrarium*, or space in which stood the high altar. This was regarded as the most sacred part of the church.



The Choir

The choir was set apart for the daily seven services of the monks, which took place every three hours—lauds, prime, tierce, sext, nones, vespers, and compline. Only "the religious" were as a rule present in the choir. The present pavement of black and white marble was presented by the celebrated Dr. Busby, the "flogging master" of Westminster School, in 1695. The present stalls and screen are the work of Mr. Blore in 1848, and succeeded those of Orlando Gibbons. The gravestone which breaks the regularity of the pavement is in memory of a Royalist lady, and the epitaph is remarkable for its very antithetic style. The front of the reredos, richly ornamented with statues, mosaic, and gems, is modern. The aspect of the choir, when it is filled with one of the great Sunday congregations, and all the clergy and the choir and the Westminster boys are there in their white surplices, is impressively beautiful.

We pass from the choir into the Chapel of

the Confessor. The shrine of the founder, or patron saint, is frequently placed behind the *sacrarium*, as at St. Albans and at St. Thomas Cantelupe at Hereford. This shrine was the splendid work of an Italian artist, Peter of Rome, whom Henry III. employed in the lack of English artists of sufficient skill. Originally it blazed with colour, gilding, and mosaic, but it shows the defacing ravages of time during the six centuries which have passed since it was erected. It consists of three parts. (1.) The *feretrum*, or basement of stone, with arcaded recesses in which pilgrims might sit who were afflicted with diseases which they desired to cure by thrusting themselves as close as possible to the saintly relics. One of the stones at the north end of the shrine, is hollowed out by the knees of innumerable pilgrims. (2.) The *theca*, *loculus*, or upper chest, which contains the body of the saint. (3.) The *co-opertorium*, cover, or lid, which might be lifted off to exhibit the coffin.

The present cover is the only trace left in the Abbey by Feckenham, its last abbot; the only addition made to the ornamentation of the Abbey in the reign of Mary Tudor. It was once inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and looked sufficiently gorgeous, but, being of poor material, was probably only intended to be temporary.

The abbot to whom I have here alluded was a great and interesting personage. His real name was John Howard, and he was called "de Feckenham," because he was born near the forest of that name in Worcestershire. He was the last mitred abbot of England, the last abbot who sat in the House of Peers. Trained as a youth in Evesham Abbey, and a convinced adherent of the old religion, he engaged in theological disputes with Cranmer and Hooper, and was lodged in the Tower. At Mary's accession she made him, first, Dean of St. Paul's, and then Abbot of Westminster. Before the dissolution of monasteries there had

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been some seventy monks. When he returned here as the last abbot there were but thirteen, and four of these had been brought from Glastonbury. The deserted and neglected cloister must have been a comfortless abode, but it was dear to the returning Benedictines. On St. Clement's Eve, November, 1555, Feckenham was consecrated in the presence of Cardinal Pole, Bishop Gardiner, and many other bishops, and he preached the sermon. On December 6 he entered the Abbey in procession with his heralds, preceded by three homicides, to whom, as in the old days, was accorded the right of sanctuary. One was the murderer of a tailor in Long Acre; one was Lord Dacre in a white sheet, who was whipped as he went; and the third was a Westminster scholar who had killed a big boy who sold books and papers, by throwing a stone which hit him under the ear. In the following January the abbot restored to its shrine the body of the Confessor, and repaired the old

work. He re-established the right of sanctuary by a plea delivered before the House of Commons. He took part in the Reconciliation Service on November 30, 1558, and in the funeral of Anne of Cleves, who had abandoned Protestantism. But he had hardly been in the Abbot's House for a year when Queen Mary died, and Feckenham preached her funeral sermon.* Sitting in the House of Lords he protested against the English Liturgy and the Royal Supremacy. It has been said that Queen Elizabeth offered him the Archbishopric of Canterbury if he would conform to the new religion, but he refused to do so. When she sent for him he was planting elms in the College garden, and refused to go till he had finished his work. During his brief period of power he had won universal respect by his moderation and kindness. He had done his best for the persecuted Protestants in Queen Mary's reign, and Queen Elizabeth was personally

* See Stanley's "Memorials," pp. 429–434.

indebted to him, for he had even ventured to incur her sister's displeasure by the persistence with which he had urged that she should be allowed her liberty. He was consigned to the Tower, but only for a time. He was afterwards left in the honourable custody of various bishops, and finally died at Wisbeach Castle, in the Isle of Ely, in 1585. A man so moderate and so generous deserves commemoration, and he has won golden opinions from all quarters. Camden calls him "a learned and good man, that lived long, did a great deal of good to the poor, and always solicited the minds of his adversaries to benevolence." Bishop Burnet calls him "a charitable and generous man that lived in great esteem in England;" and Fuller describes him as "a man cruel to none, courteous and charitable to all who needed his help and his liberality."

The floor of the chapel was once inlaid in rich mosaic, which may still be partly seen

The Confessor's Tomb

on the space where now stands the Coronation chair. It has been mostly worn away by the hurrying feet of generations. A lovely fragment of it, of a sort of tartan pattern, once adorned the grave of little Prince Alfonso, son of Edward I., who, on August 19, 1284, hung over the shrine the golden circlet of Llewellyn, Prince of Wales. It may be seen by uplifting the step under the chantry of Henry V.

It was the presence of the saintly Confessor and the desire to rest near his bones, which gathered into the little chapel the remains of Henry III., Edward I., Edward III., Richard II., Henry V., and of the Queen Edith, daughter of Earl Godwin, good Queen Maud, Eleanor of Castile, Philippa of Hainault, Anne of Bohemia, Katherine of Valois, and of many princes and princesses, including the once highly honoured Thomas of Woodstock, whose treacherous murder is a serious blot on the character of his nephew, Richard II.

The tombs here represented on the right are those of Edward I. and his queen. The chantry at the end is that of Henry V., the most splendid monument in the Abbey. Under it is the warped and ruined effigy of heart of oak, which the passionate affection of the nation placed over the bones of its hero-king. Originally it was plated with silver, and had a head and regalia of silver, all of which had been stolen before the end of Henry VIII.'s reign. The chantry was built for the use of monks, who were to sing masses for the king's soul; and here, a few years ago, after curious and romantic fortunes, were re-buried the remains of the hero's queen, Katharine, daughter of Charles VI. of France. On the beam above are the helmet, shield, and saddlebow used by Henry V. at the battle of Agincourt. Such is the tradition of the Abbey; but antiquarians assert that this is a mere tilting helmet carried before the bier at the King's funeral, and *not* what Shakespeare calls

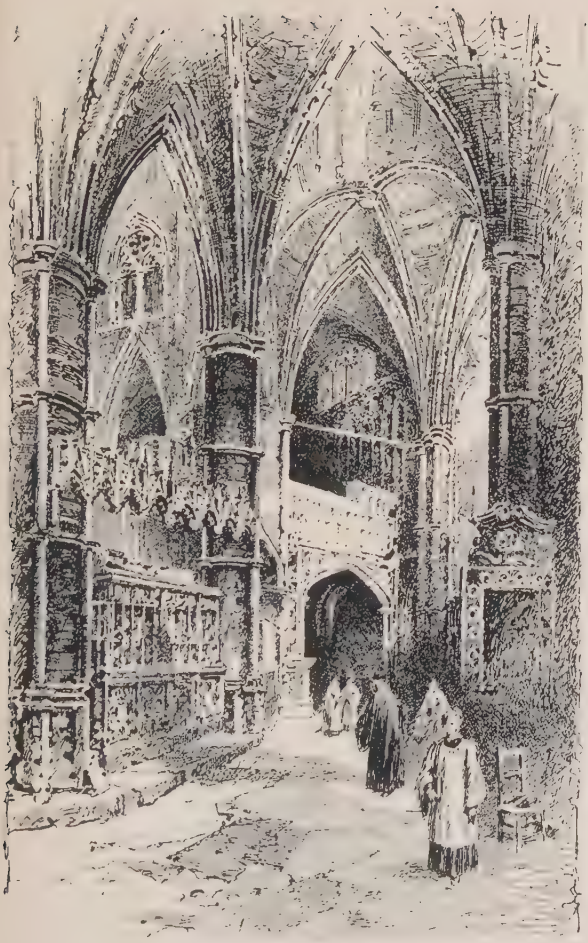
". . . . the helm
Which did affright the air at Agincourt."

The massive and artistic iron gate was the work of a London smith in the ninth year of Henry VI.

Besides these memorials of the past there are many other things in this chapel well worthy of the visitor's notice. He should look carefully at the tomb of Richard II., which is full of minute points of interest; of Edward III., and of his Queen Philippa of Hainault. On the other side he should study the tomb of Henry III., the builder of the present Abbey. He will also find much to absorb his attention in the ancient Coronation chair, and in the carved frieze above the screen which represents in full series the events, both legendary and historical, in the life of Edward the Confessor.

We now pass into the south ambulatory, and ask the reader to study the marvellous complexity, yet exquisitely symmetrical unity,

of the architecture. The view here presented is a very favourite one with artists, though it requires a thorough and even consummate artist to sketch it perfectly. The word ambulatory is applied to the walks on either side of the choir and round the chapel of the Confessor. The tomb at the left is that of the great Plantagenet, Edward III. Its canopy is "of carved wood, with imitation vaulting, pinnacles, and buttresses." The niches in it will show the aspect of a royal family in the fourteenth century, though the figures are not visible in our picture. The first statuette of gilded bronze represents the famous Edward the Black Prince in a long mantle with the edges cut in leaves. Next to him are Joan of the Tower, the genial giant Lionel Duke of Clarence, Edmund of Dongley, Duke of York, Mary of Brittany, and the boy William of Hatfield. The sub-base of the monument is enriched with the Perpendicular quatrefoil; in the centre of each quatrefoil is an emblazoned shield of



South Ambulatory

English enamel. The king's effigy is a likeness from a cast of the features taken after death. It is a kingly face, and has reminded many observers of the features of the late Lord Tennyson, who, I believe, traced his descent from the great Plantagenet on the mother's side. It will be interesting to the visitor to recall that this tomb is mentioned in Shakespeare's *Richard II.* as

> "the honourable tomb
> That stands above your royal grandsire's bones."

Beyond this is the once costly but now much ruined tomb of Edward III.'s wife, Queen Philippa of Hainault. The very plain and prosaic Flemish face is a likeness, and the hideous horned head-dress which was the fashion of the day is again represented on the tiny alabaster bust of her daughter, Blanche de la Tour, in the adjoining chapel. The tomb has suffered more than any other in the Abbey, and was considerably encroached upon by the chantry

of Henry V., part of which is visible beyond it. To the right are the chapels of St. Edmund and St. Nicolas, which are crowded with interesting tombs and full of historic associations.

In the north ambulatory the tombs immediately to the right (see sketch on page 65) are those of Edward I. and Henry III. The tomb of Edward I. was always a very plain one; perhaps because he had ordered his son to carry his bones at the head of the army till Scotland was subdued. The tomb never had niche, or enamel, or colour, or effigy, but it was once covered with a painted canopy and protected by a fine piece of ironwork. These have disappeared, as well as the embroidered pall which probably once covered the unadorned monument of this warrior king.

The tomb which fronts us in this view is that of Sir Louis Robsart, Lord Bourchier. The huge stone banners carved upon it are a reminiscence of the fact that he was

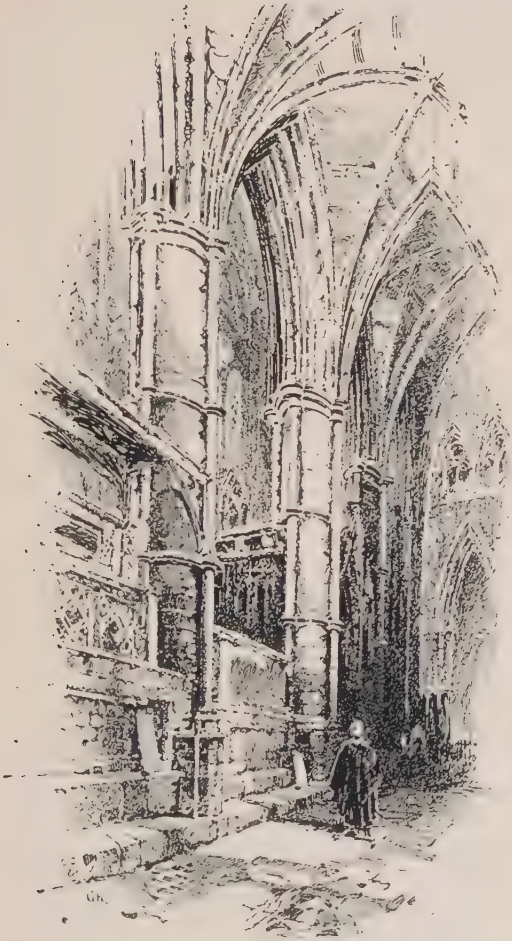
North Ambulatory

Henry V.'s standard-bearer at the battle of Agincourt. The antiquary Dart, in his great book on the Abbey, says that the arms on the flags, "three wheels *or* on a field *argent*," are those of Sir Payne Roet, the father of Chaucer's wife, and of Catharine Swinford, wife of John, Duke of Gaunt, or at any rate the mother of his legitimated children. Dart says that he also found Chaucer's own arms upon the monument, namely "argent and gules per pale, or bend countercharged." There was probably no other connection between Lord Bourchier and the great poet than one by some intermarriage of both with the Roet family.

On page 69 we see the north ambulatory from the other direction. The tomb of Edward I. is the one by which the verger is standing. The other tomb is that of Henry III. The bronze effigy is by a great artist, Torel, and is not a likeness like that of Edward III., but the *ideal* effigy of a king much younger than Henry III. was when he

died, and without his defect in the eyelid. The tomb was once covered with glittering mosaic, of which but little remains. It is said that his son, Edward I., brought with him from the Holy Land the precious stones of jasper with which it is enriched. In the garments of the effigy there are holes for other precious stones, which have been torn out. But mutilated as the monument is, enough remains to show its original splendour.

The picture on page 75 shows us the chapel raised for the reception of the Tudor king, Henry VII. Here stood the old Lady Chapel dedicated to the Virgin, which Henry destroyed in order to replace it by this sumptuous and lovely building. Everything in this chapel is worthy of careful study. The bronze gates, once shining, now dim, are not only an exquisite specimen of a rare kind of work, but also illustrate the quiet yet intense determination of Henry VII. to put into the forefront every possible indication



North Ambulatory

of his claims to the crown of England. The gate is ingeniously adorned with the falcon and fetterlock of the House of York; with the portcullis of the House of Lancaster; with a double Tudor rose; with the interwoven letters H. R.; with the crowns surmounted by daisies, in allusion to the name of his mother, Margaret of Richmond; and besides all this, it is here and there decorated with a dragon, which is meant for the Red Dragon of Cadwallader, and was designed to hint that Henry's claim was strengthened by his supposed descent from the British king. Henry's ancestor, Owen Tudor, was pronounced by a Welsh commission of inquiry to be an undoubted lineal descendant of Brute, the Trojan, and of Æneas himself—a genealogy of forty-seven degrees, which they claim to have incontestibly proved, and in which there was only one female! The fan tracery of the self-poised roof, which is also to be found at St. George's, Windsor, and in King's College Chapel, Cambridge, is never

found in Continental architecture, but is the peculiar glory of the English style. This style of architecture is exquisitely described by Wordsworth in his sonnet on King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

"Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the architect who planned,
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed scholars only—this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence.
Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof,
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality."

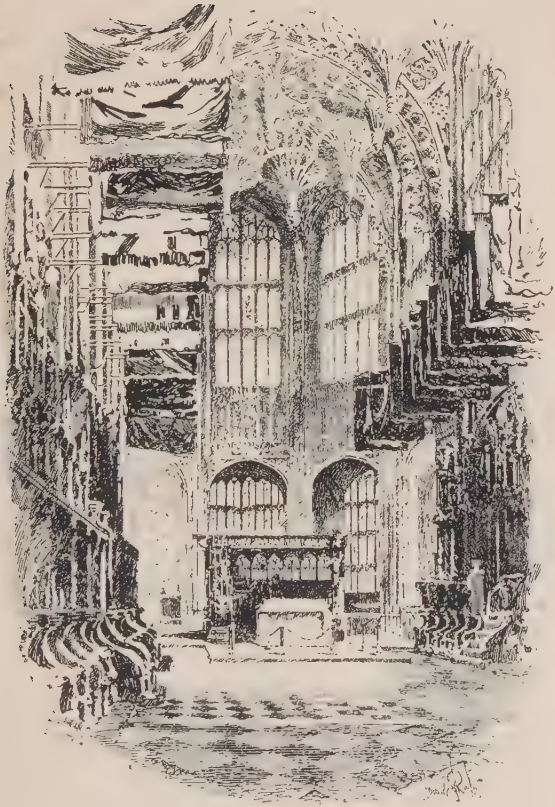
The choir stalls and *Miserere* seats are exquisitely and elaborately carved, but with designs which are sometimes grotesque and satirical. The niches which run round the walls once contained one hundred and seven stone figures, of which ninety-five

remain. All these figures, except those of some philosophers, in the south-east bays, have been identified by the antiquarian knowledge and research of Mr. Micklethwaite. Some of them are exceedingly curious. One is to a saint who has been for ages forgotten. It is the fifth figure from the east in the south aisle, and represents a *bearded* woman leaning on a T-shaped cross. It is St. Wilgefortis, who was also known as St. Incumber and Santa Liberada. She was apparently a saint only of the vulgar, and is ignored by Alban Butler and by Abbé Glaire. She used to be approached with an offering of oats by peasant couples who desired to be loosed from unhappy marriages; and the legend is that she prayed to be free from a match which was being forced upon her. Her prayer was granted, and the contract was ended by her growth, in one night, of a manly beard, as she is here represented. It is perhaps the only figure of her in England. We can but hope

that Henry did not place her among his accustomed "avours or guardian saints" out of any uneasiness which he felt in his marriage with the fair and gentle Elizabeth of York.

The cost of the whole chapel was stupendous, and it shows that Henry VII., though accounted miserly, stopped short at no expense for the glorification of himself and his dynasty. The banners are those of the Knights of the Bath, of which this was constituted the chapel by George I. in 1725. The banner of George I. and of his grandson, Prince Frederick, are among them.

The magnificent tomb in front is that of the founder of the chapel, whose effigy—a marvel of delicate sculpture—lies beside that of his wife, Elizabeth of York. "He lieth at Westminster," said Lord Bacon, "in one of the stateliest and daintiest monuments of Europe, both of the chapel and the sepulchre. So that he dwelleth more richly dead in the monument of his tomb than he did alive in

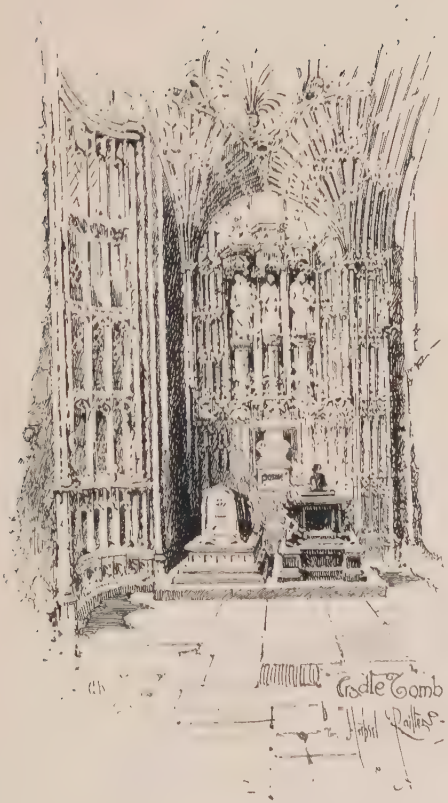


Henry VII. Chapel

Richmond or in any of his palaces." The bronze "closure" round the tomb is the work of the fierce Florentine sculptor, Torregiano, who as a youth broke the nose of Michael Angelo with a blow of his mallet; who frightened Benvenuto Cellini from accepting his invitations to England by his "loud voice, and frowning eyebrows, and boasts of his feats among those beasts of Englishmen;" and who finally starved himself to death in a Spanish dungeon of the Inquisition, where he was imprisoned because in a fit of rage he had dashed to pieces his own fine statue of the Virgin for which the Duke of Arcos, who had given him the commission, paid him insufficiently. It would require too much space to describe adequately this noble tomb. In front of it behind the hanging chains, is the small altar-tomb of Edward VI., of which the delicate sculpture is also the work of Torregiano. It is a restoration, for, strange to say, the only tomb which the Puritans

entirely destroyed in the Abbey was that of the only English king who was an absolute Puritan. This is easily accounted for when we recall that it was an altar-tomb, and was erected in the reign of Mary Tudor.

The end of the north aisle of Henry VII.'s Chapel is known as "Innocents' Corner," since only children lie buried there. The cradle tomb to the left is that of the Princess Sophia, an infant daughter of James I., who died in 1606, aged three days. The next is that of her sister, the Princes Mary, who died in 1607, at the age of two years, and whom her father describes as "a little royal rose prematurely plucked by death." The small sarcophagus in a recess of the east wall between these two tombs contains the bones of the two poor boys, Edward V. and his brother Richard, Duke of York. They were murdered in the Tower, by order of their uncle, Richard III., in 1483, and their bones were found in 1674 in a chest under a staircase in the Tower. As there could be


Castle Tomb
Michael Pattison

no doubt that these were the bones of the two royal boys, Charles II. spared an infinitesimal sum from his gross and selfish extravagances to erect this paltry little memorial in their honour. The design is by Sir Christopher Wren.

The sculptured figures above will show the character of all the statues with which the chapel is surrounded, most of which are so high up that they cannot easily be examined. All the saints represented have been identified by their emblems. Of the three which front us in the sketch, the one on the right is St. Lawrence with his gridiron, and the middle one is a king with a book, which may be meant for St. Louis of France or King Henry VI., whose canonisation was, however, not completed, because Henry VII. grudged the large fees which the Pope demanded. The one to the left was long an enigma to the antiquaries. It represents a priest who is bearded, is vested for mass, and has a scapular pulled over his chasuble.

But he appears also to be a soldier, for he wears iron gauntlets; and a student, for he carries a book; and a slayer of monsters, for his right hand holds a stole, which is twisted round the neck of a dragon. Mr. Micklethwaite, F.S.A., has now proved that this is an ideal figure—an "All-hallows," of which it is an almost unique example. It was the custom in mediæval churches to place at the east end an image of the patron saint. When a church was dedicated to All Saints, a figure was sometimes placed above the altar, which represented the combined attributes of many saints; and this is the probable explanation of this curious composite figure.

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